



UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ROSA L. DELAURO

3D DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

May 4, 2004

CO-CHAIR, DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND  
POLICY COMMITTEE

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COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

The Honorable Les Brownlee  
Acting Secretary  
Department of The Army  
Room 3E700  
The Pentagon, 20301-0102

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I write to request answers to several important questions raised at a meeting I attended on April 26 with families of the Army's 439th Quartermaster Company, an Army Reserve company headquartered in New Haven, Connecticut. Due to the recent decision to retain an additional 20,000 troops in Iraq, the 206 members of the 439th will continue to support Operation Iraqi Freedom until this fall.

As you may know, the 439th was responsible for establishing two fuel depots on the road to Baghdad in southern Iraq and one in northern Iraq. The company was also responsible for maintaining fuel operations at Tallil Air Force Base. In total, the 439th fueled more than 180,000 vehicles during its time in Iraq, which stretched from May 2003 to April 2004. As of Monday, the members of the 439th will have completed 15 months on active duty status.

I know that you share the pride I feel in the success that these service members have had. However, this deployment has also taken a great toll on the families. While uncertainty and fear affect service members and their families in any deployment, the loved ones of the 94th Readiness Command companies and battalions have faced unusual burdens. Unlike families whose military member is on active duty, Reserve families often do not have access to the same facilities – from commissaries to mental health services – because they live far from the home installation. Similarly, the expectations that families have for deployment of Reservists are far different from those of active duty members.

The Company is now in Kuwait, having been relieved by a comparable Air Force Reserve unit. Uncertainty surrounding their current status and anticipated return date continues to tear at the family members. With this in mind, I respectfully request that you provide me with answers to the following requests, many of which were raised by family members at the recent meeting, which was organized by the 94th Regional Readiness Command:



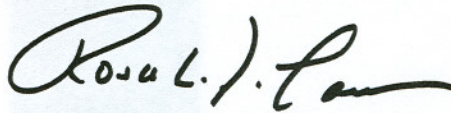
- What is the current anticipated end date of the 439th's time in the Iraq theater? Family members have heard directly from service members that the current extension may continue for anywhere between 90 days and 120 days. I understand that events on the ground will ultimately dictate how you position troops, but providing the families with a current timeline will be very beneficial to family morale. Further, it is vital to the dependents of these service members that they receive individual orders stating deployment dates and activities. This information must be furnished to creditors, schools and employers of Reserve soldiers.
- Last month, while the 439th was preparing to return to the United States, many items belonging to members of the company – including uniforms and boots – were shipped home ahead of the soldiers. These items must now be returned. Because these items were shipped prior to the extension of the 439th's tour I request that you ensure that the Army incur the cost of shipping these items back to the Iraq theater.
- According to General Zukauskas, it is not yet clear what mission the 439th will fill during the next three or four months of deployment. Given that its members are trained as fuelers, I hope that you will not allow the 439th to engage in convoy protection or other missions for which they are not properly trained or lack adequate equipment. I am aware of the sensitivity with which military operations are treated, and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter in a secure setting.
- Several members of the 439th have indicated to me that they have not received appropriate pay during their deployment. I therefore request that you review when members of the 439th qualified for additional pay, and provide me with the results of this review. Obviously, if errors in payments are detected, soldiers must be provided all compensation earned as soon as possible.
- Several dependents of members of the 439th have expressed concern over the lack of psychiatric counseling available to the service members. While I understand that those troops who are still engaged in combat operations should not see a decrease in psychiatric services available to them, I hope that such services can be made available to members of the 439th.
- Finally, recognizing that extended deployments take an emotional toll on families and service members alike, I request that you require service members and their families to receive psychiatric counseling when they return to the United States. Further, the members of the 439th would be well served by having a counseling staff available at the Company's headquarters in New Haven.

Secretary Brownlee  
April 30, 2004  
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I request that you act quickly address these issues that are reducing morale in the 439th, and causing considerable consternation among the families. I fear that a failure to adequately address these issues will further the emotional strain of deployment on both service members and families, as well as lead to a decrease in re-enlistment in the 439th.

Thank you very much for your prompt attention to this matter. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rosa L. DeLauro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rosa" being the most prominent part.

ROSA L. DELAURO  
Member of Congress